

MINUTES
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
COUNTY OF YORK

Adjourned Meeting
June 10, 2003

6:00 p.m.

Meeting Convened. An Adjourned Meeting of the York County Board of Supervisors was called to order at 6:01 p.m., Tuesday, June 10, 2003, in the East Room, York Hall, by Chairman James S. Burgett.

Attendance. The following members of the Board of Supervisors were present: Sheila S. Noll, Donald E. Wiggins, James S. Burgett, and Thomas G. Shepperd.

Walter C. Zaremba was absent

Also in attendance were James O. McReynolds, County Administrator; J. Mark Carter, Assistant County Administrator; and James E. Barnett, County Attorney.

WORK SESSION

ROUTE 17 CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENTS

Mr. McReynolds stated he was pleased with the progress of the Route 17 Revitalization Committee. Mr. Coxton is here as Chairman of the committee to discuss their efforts if the Board wishes. Mr. Noel will provide a review of the committee's progress and a proposal for a grant funding program to make the corridor more attractive.

Mr. James W. Noel, Jr., Director of Economic Development, indicated that Steve Cook from his office was also present representing the business community and who is an integral part of the committee. He stated a group will be going to Fairfax later this month to look at a corridor there which is very much like Route 17. Fairfax is doing some proactive things, and Mr. Carter will provide the Board with a review. Mr. Noel then reviewed the major elements that the committee is working on, stating a major issue is to do things to help local businesses thrive. He stated that looking good is a large part of being successful, and the committee is approaching this task in a positive way. The committee wishes to have a town hall meeting for stakeholders in the project in order to get some input from them. Mr. Noel indicated that if they aren't on board, the revitalization project is going nowhere. He then reviewed the proposal for a grant program where the basic idea is to provide a matching grant to a property owner to improve the facade of his Route 17 business in landscaping, signage, or other property improvements. He stated the grant funds would be dispersed after the project is completed, and projects will have to be approved by the review committee. Mr. Noel also spoke of an idea not specifically in the grant program to perhaps offer some free design assistance from one of the local universities, and something parallel could be done for landscaping by local nurseries. He stated criteria has been set for evaluating the proposals, and the committee's hope is for a big impact. Mr. Noel suggested that the Board of Supervisors might want to put as much as \$300,000 into this program to come from the Economic Development Fund.

Mrs. Noll stated she liked the idea of a town hall meeting, and she felt the committee has done a super job thus far. She asked how many of the stakeholders have been involved in the process to date.

Mr. Noel stated there are probably four or five on the committee.

Mrs. Noll noted that the majority of the business owners on Route 17 have not seen the proposal. Before the process goes much further, she stated staff should solicit some input from the businesses to see if they think the committee is heading in the right direction. She stated she would like to see more involvement from them.

Mr. Noel stated that can certainly be done. He stated another thing the committee has been working on is acquiring a good database so information like this can be distributed. He agreed that it is imperative that the committee receive input from the businesses along Route 17. He then noted that Fairfax has a grant program, and the group going up later this month is going to get some input from them as to their success.

Mrs. Noll indicated the Industrial Development Authority would be responsible for giving the grants.

Mr. Noel stated Mrs. Noll was correct.

Mr. Wiggins asked which section of the proposal is the part dealing with landscaping of the junkyards.

Mr. Noel stated it is not specifically addressed in any particular area of the corridor.

Mr. McReynolds indicated there is already some landscaping that can be done with some revenue sharing money, but he did not know if the committee had been able to review it yet.

Mr. Carter stated there is a subcommittee working on it, and there should be some input soon.

Discussion followed about the possibility of planting in the VDOT rights-of-way.

Mr. Carter noted that the committee is also looking at a consistent style of fence for those properties, and at what the cost might be for the fence to run across the entire frontage supplemented by some landscaping.

Chairman Burgett stated part of the purpose of the committee is to interact with the owners in a friendly way to get the job done, and he expressed his confidence that this is the approach that the committee will use with these businessmen. He asked if the areas of Route 17 will be placed in zones and specific areas targeted to recruit the right businesses for the area.

Mr. Noel indicated that was exactly what has been done. The committee has a working room at Coxton's where it has laid out the entire corridor. The corridor has been broken into sections, and the committee will be focusing on each section at a time, starting from the south and working up.

Discussion followed concerning the possible use of overlay districts.

Mrs. Noll stated that perhaps there are too many categories in some of our zoning, and perhaps there are types of businesses that should be eliminated because they are not appropriate for Route 17.

Mr. McReynolds added that there are also certain businesses the Board might want to attract to certain areas of Route 17.

Mr. Carter gave examples of areas on Route 17 to which the Board would like to attract certain kinds of businesses.

Mr. McReynolds stated staff and the committee have already begun the process of looking at areas that sorely need attention. He stated that in order to make the corridor more improved, an option might be to purchase the properties. He stated all options were being investigated.

Mr. Noel explained a proposal to the Board members dealing with block signs for Route 17. He noted that sometimes it's hard to find a certain business located on Route 17, so the committee has come up with the idea of block signs to be erected so a business can tell someone on what block of Route 17 they are in in order to be located. The committee is looking at landscaping easements to allow the County to improve the landscaping in front of businesses along Route 17. Mr. Noel indicated another important piece of the process is documentation, and the committee has had the whole corridor video-taped for a current baseline.

Mr. Carter indicated the County's sign shop can fabricate the signs. He noted that the Board can move on this idea immediately for \$500 out of the Route 17 fund.

By consensus, the Board directed that block signs be fabricated and erected along the Route 17 corridor.

Mr. Shepperd stated he saw the war room at Coxton's today, and one thing he saw was a 1974 view of the Route 17 corridor. He stated there is still a lot of activity available today that was happening then. He then asked about utilization of zoning, stating the County would have to have the owner agree unless the County is doing a complete rezoning.

Mr. Carter stated the concept of the overlay district would not change the General Business zoning. He stated that in this case the overlay would actually relax some of the requirements for redevelopment and revitalization of projects that are challenged.

Mr. Shepperd agreed it has to be a plus from a business perspective. He stated he was also concerned about community involvement. He noted he didn't quite understand the easement acquisition, and asked if it was development rights.

Mr. Carter stated no, that it was essentially permission from the owner for the County to go on their property and do things outlined in the easement. Perhaps the improvement could be to remove some concrete or old foundation and plant some shrubs and maintain them. The owner can do anything he wants--he can sell the property at any time.

Mr. Shepperd asked if the easement goes away if the owner sells the property.

Mr. Noel stated there is language in the easement agreement that states the easement is terminated upon development by the owner or sale to another owner.

Mr. McReynolds noted that some of the easements might be negotiated so that the County is reimbursed when the property is sold. This would be done on a case-by-case basis.

Mr. Shepperd asked if the VDOT Revenue Sharing funds of \$30,000 will be adequate.

Mr. Carter indicated the County has been successful in obtaining more funding, and now has about \$220,000 available for Route 17.

Mr. Shepperd asked if the proposal should also address future properties.

Chairman Burgett stated this program is for revitalization of what exists now. If someone puts something new on Route 17, they will have to meet the current standards.

Mrs. Noll stated she felt that if the Board goes with an overlay zone and there is vacant property, when it is developed it should be under the same guidelines.

Mr. Shepperd stated if there is the underlying General Business, it doesn't mean the property owners have to comply with only the basic requirements, and he asked if in the future the Board can offer the incentive.

Mr. Wiggins noted that the Board was not trying to supplement new businesses, but revitalizing the existing ones for the beautification of the Route 17 corridor.

Discussion followed concerning the administration of the grant program.

Mr. Noel stated the committee is a subcommittee of the Industrial Development Authority (IDA), and program implementation is its responsibility. The authority for the program and funding is going through the IDA, but the committee will be making the recommendations for IDA approval.

Mrs. Noll asked what recourse does a business have if turned down.

Mr. Noel stated they could take it to the IDA. He stated it was a good point that the committee hadn't addressed.

Further discussion followed on the administration of the program and eligibility criteria for receiving grant funds.

Mr. Carter then provided the Board members with a handout on the overlay district. He stated it would relax certain provisions. He provided the Board with examples, such as building height, reduction in front setback, reduction in parking requirements, reduction in setback distance for parking spaces from property lines, replacement of certain signs with larger signs, reduction in normal landscaping requirements, expedited plan review process, or sub-areas that will get certain attention. Mr. Carter stated the committee and staff should be providing the Board with more specific proposals after the trip to Fairfax. He indicated staff needs some better guidance in the County ordinance dealing with redevelopment situations because now they are unsure as to how to deal with certain situations.

Mr. Noel also noted there were some very good ideas in the Cox Study, and there are some things the committee wants to use that will be very good for the corridor.

Mr. Junior Coxton, Chairman of the Route 17 Revitalization Committee, thanked the Board for giving the business owners the opportunity to have some control over this process. He stated the corridor has to change, now or later. The change from 1974 to today is mostly a good change. He stated York County has done a good job overall, and the residents of the County are changing--they want better and prettier--they are more involved in their community. Mr. Coxton stated the committee wants to get the businesses involved and work with them to make their businesses nicer and better. He stated this type of program has never happened before, and the committee is doing a lot of research. The Board of Supervisors should get recommendations and a final report in August. He stated Route 17 is made up of expensive property, and he didn't know of any businessman who didn't want to increase his wealth--they just don't know how to go about it.

Mr. McReynolds then reminded the Board members of their next Regular Meeting to be held on June 17 and a work session to be held on June 24 in the East Room, York Hall, to discuss Tax Relief for the Elderly and the Landscaping Provisions of the Zoning Ordinance.

Meeting Adjourned. At 6:54 p.m. Chairman Burgett declared that the meeting be adjourned sine die.

James O. McReynolds, Clerk
York County Board of Supervisors

James S. Burgett, Chairman
York County Board of Supervisors